DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 053 641 HE 002 348

TITLE	The Harvard College Class of 1970.
INSTITUTION	Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Mass.
PUB DATE	Dec 70
NOTE	26p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Career Choice, *Career Planning, *College Graduates, College Students, *Graduate Study, Higher Education, Surveys
IDENTIFIERS	*Harvard College

ABSTRACT

This report is primarily based on a survey taken of the Harvard Class of 1970 in May of that year. It identifies and discusses four major trends in which this class differs from its predecessors. (1) A significantly higher number of 1970 seniors were undecided about their immediate or long-range plans after graduation. (2) There was a substantial decline in the proportion of seniors planning to continue their education immediately after graduation; many desired a 1- to 3-year transitional period before making a professional commitment. (3) Their graduate school plans differed substantially from those who graduated 4 or 5 years earlier; fewer planned academic careers, while more were interested in attending medical or law school. (4) Many found it much harder to find the kind of job desired, and some actively sought positions that made few intellectual demands on them. The report also offers some recommendations that include: (1) increased time off before starting college; (2) more opportunity for field work related to the student's interests; (3) increased term-time and more attention to providing students with summer employment; and (4) more interaction between students and professionals in fields other than higher education. Comparative tables are included in the appendix. (AF)

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The Harvard College Class of 1970

The Office for Graduate and Career Plans

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

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Printed in the United States of America
by the Office for Graduate and Career Plans
54 Dunster Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts

The Harvard College Class of 1970

Around Harvard, there is an often repeated tale about a group of recently arrived Freshmen who were walking one day to the Union for lunch. As the group -- there were five of them -- began to cross Quincy Street a passing car almost hit them. The five discussed the near accident over lunch and speculated on the ways the newspapers might have covered the story if they had been killed. After much discussion, they unanimously agreed that the story would have been headlined "FIVE FUTURE U.S. PRESIDENTS KILLED IN AUTO ACCIDENT."

Members of the Class of 1970 also brought interesting and fascinating career expectations with them as freshmen, and like other classes, a great percentage of them changed their plans and expectations during the ensuing four years. However, in the OG&CP's survey carried out last spring, the Class of 1970 indicated some planning tendencies different from those of their predecessors. Briefly, there were four trends indicative of change and worthy of note. First, there were an increasing number of Harvard graduates who admitted to being undecided about their immediate and long-range plans. Second, the graduate school plans of the Class of '70 differed substantially from those who graduated only four or five years previously. Next, an increasing number of seniors apparently felt that for a few years at least they wished to delay entry into professional life and instead experiment with different types of occupations and life styles. Finally, many graduates found it much harder to find the kind of job they desired, and some of them may have altered their plans in order to accept largely manual tasks.

How were these trends identified? In part, they were drawn from the previously mentioned survey collected from the Class of 1970 during the month before their graduation. Earlier impressions were received by the counselors at the OG&CP during the year 1969-1970 when they engaged in almost 1,000 hour-long meetings with about 600 individual seniors. Further information was gained from conversations in House dining halls (where each of the five OG&CP counselors is a non-resident Tutor), and from discussions with Masters, Senior Tutors and other Faculty members, etc. The data presented in the text and appendix of this report was taken almost exclusively from the questionnaires collected in May.

The Undecideds

The Class of '70 shows a significantly high number of seniors who at the time of graduation were undecided about their immediate or long-range plans. In 1967 approximately 90 seniors indicated they were uncertain in their thinking about eventual careers, while in June of 1970 over 200 expressed similar uncertainty.

What is responsible for this phenomenon? Many, whether justified or not, have a tendency to attribute their indecisiveness to the atmosphere and life style at Harvard. An emphasis on intellectual development to the exclusion of other aspects of one's personality, and the liberal arts character of a Harvard education are often regarded by students as fostering a state of vocational limbo. Undergraduates in the College are encouraged to engage in abstract thought and are forever reminded of the awesome problems confronting society; by comparison, the resolution of their vocational plans may often seem mundane and trivial. It may be an overstatement, but for one reason or another many students feel that occupational goals which do not coincide with the values of the faculty are not topics that warrant much attention, research, or discussion.

It might be asked whether, and to what extent, the faculty has a role in helping the student to formulate his vocational plans. Many faculty members, because their contact is limited to only a small percentage of the student body, may have had little exposure to the large segment of the undergraduate body who fall into the undecided category. While the extremely able and highly motivated undergraduate might approach his instructors with questions about the academic profession, the majority of students seem to be reluctant to discuss other, non-academic careers with these men and women. Since only 143 out of 1,079 men in the Class of 1970 indicated that they plan to enter the field of higher education, it appears that instructors may provide significant vocational help to less than 15 percent of the class.

One cannot, of course, discuss the sources of indecision without considering the effect of the draft in compounding confusion regarding vocational choice. Male undergraduates today spend vast amounts of energy defining their own moral position in regard to the draft, investigating the implications of this position, and finally exploring the alternatives open to them. For many this is a time-consuming and emotionally exhausting process that leaves little energy left to think about plans for the future. In addition, many feel that vocational planning is of questionable value while the issues of the draft and military service loom so large and near. This was particularly apparent during the spring of 1970, when the immense emotional involvement of students in the Cambodia episode seemed to drain them of the energy to focus on the "minor" problem of occupational choice.

Other factors can be identified which apparently make vocational planning difficult for today's undergraduate. Some of these have been discussed in the reports on previous classes and others will be mentioned later in this review.

Trends in Graduate and Professional Education

Recently, there has been a substantial decline in the proportion of seniors planning to continue their education immediately after graduation -- a figure of 74% in 1966 dropped to 46% in 1970. Two major factors seem to underlie this shift: first, the change in the draft laws (until 1967 students who attended any type of graduate school were automatically deferred from the draft); second, a feeling on the part of many undergraduates that they have been over-intellectualized, that they have had too much of classroom learning and library research. To continue without interruption the same type of experience after college seems to demand a continued neglect of the other aspects of their personalities and the sacrifice of many of their nonacademic interests.

Two developing trends require attention within the area of graduate education. First, there has been a marked decline in the number of seniors planning on pursuing a Ph.D. immediately after graduation. For instance, in 1967 316 men indicated that they intended to matriculate in a Ph.D. program, while the totals for the classes of 1969 and 1970 were 137 and 147 respectively. In the past these numbers were probably inflated somewhat by students who sought refuge in an academic department in order to avoid association with the military and participation in a war that to them was immoral. Whether or not they have continued with their studies and remained in higher education is unknown.

The second reason why fewer present undergraduates are interested in pursuing an academic career probably results from the publicity given to the difficulty which doctoral candidates are experiencing in securing satisfactory employment. Many graduate students express both disenchantment with the unattractive nature of the few available positions and disappointment about the recent governmental cutback in

the funds allocated for research. Further, the decreasing number of federal fellowships for graduate study in the arts and sciences probably contributes to the decline in the number of men considering such study. Not only does the lack of funding make graduate schools of arts and sciences seem less attractive to college seniors, it also makes those currently enrolled in such graduate programs question the wisdom of remaining in their field. After a painstaking analysis of the situation, some have decided to switch careers in midstream; for example, never before have medical schools received so many applications from Ph.D. holders and candidates.

Juxtaposed against the decline in interest in Ph.D. programs, there has been, nationwide at least, a substantial increase in both the number and quality of students hoping to attend law and medical schools. The effect of this has not been fully observed at Harvard as yet, partly because of the known inelasticity in the number of medical school places and because of the recent deterring influence of the draft on law school attendance.

Nevertheless it is clear to counselors at the OG&CP, as well as to individual students, that it has become more difficult within recent years to gain access to both medical and law school. In 1970 fully 60% of all U.S. medical school applicants were unable to enter a medical school in this country. The comparable figure ten years ago was 40%. Although the situation at Harvard is not as pessimistic, it is still disturbing to realize that about thirty members of the Class of 1970 were denied admission at all the schools to which they applied. Many others were deterred earlier in their undergraduate careers because of mediocre grades from attempting medical school. Since 1968 the number of applications filed by Harvard students has risen from 1,175 to 1,735; the number of acceptances has increased only from 340 to 391.

The reasons are legion for this nationwide increase of interest in the medical profession. Social consciousness directs many undergraduates toward medicine. Others, by virtue of parental or childhood exposure, have had a long-standing interest and attraction to this field. Further, there seems to be an increasing number of applicants who have become disenchanted with other fields. The lack of research and fellowship funds and the much publicized glut in the Ph.D. market may be primarily responsible for this last group.

There is less certainty in explaining the greater difficulty of gaining access to the nation's top law schools. Perhaps a rapidly increasing number of liberal arts graduates, aware of the distinct lack of vocational utility of their undergraduate education yet unwilling to make a narrow vocational commitment, see in law school an opportunity to develop a broadly marketable skill. In line with this, it seems from conversations that many students at Harvard continue to apply to law school with little intention of practicing once they graduate. One suspects, however, that after completing the program a substantial percentage of those who were once ambivalent about the profession will pursue a legal career. Of equal importance, however, is the increased social consciousness and the desire among young adults to institute social change. This leads many to enter law school with the hope of obtaining the skills and experience necessary to attain their widely diversified goals. As with medical schools, admission is becoming more difficult. In 1968 Harvard Law School admitted about half of their Harvard College applicants; in 1970 the ratio was about one-third.

Increased national emphasis on female and minority group representation in professional schools also contributes to the difficulty of admission to both medical and law schools for most Harvard undergraduates. With little increase in class sizes these candidates displace white male applicants. There are currently fifty women in their first year at the Harvard Law School; five years ago the figure was twenty-two.

Years of Exploration

Increasingly it appears that a one-to three-year transitional period after graduation is desired by many undergraduates before they make a vocational commitment. The majority of seniors no longer take the attitude that they must secure a good job or enter graduate school immediately after graduation in order to begin the long upward climb with maximum advantage. Implicit in the "long climb" attitude of the past was the assumption that a man was to some degree adaptable and hence could modify himself to the demands of almost any environment. Recently, undergraduates have expressed a fear of making an immediate commitment to a specific lifelong undertaking, apparently because they feel unable to estimate the amount of satisfaction they will obtain from any particular option. Rather than make an ill-informed gamble, many want to observe, to travel, to experiment, and to talk to a multitude of people in all walks of life. Once this data collecting process has been completed, they feel they will be in a better position to make the commitment of time, money and energy toward preparing for a particular career.

Often the Directors of this Office have heard, "I never want to take another exam," or "Never will I write another paper," or "Thank God, I don't have to sit through more lectures." The feeling underlying all these statements, of course, is a relief at escaping from academic constraints. Carried one step further, these statements seem to indicate a refusal to again become involved with "narrow" or prescribed institutional learning. While that feeling may be strongly held at the time of graduation, exposure to the world outside Harvard and the job market in particular often reverses such an attitude. Once aware that our credentialed society would reward his additional degrees, the previously devout non-academician returns to graduate school. However, this time he enters the academic confines with an explicit purpose and the desire to develop

a skill. In this context it is interesting to note the experience of another class: while only 56% of the Class of 1959 planned on graduate study immediately after graduation, ten years later some 80% reported having attended graduate school.

Although many need a break in their education, this is by no means a new or universal requirement. It was mentioned in this report because there seems to be a trend in this direction among many undergraduates. Nevertheless, it should be noted that many students, including blacks as well as those who amass substantial debts while in college, clearly hope that the college will have provided them with the tools with which to establish themselves, professionally and economically, as rapidly as possible. These men feel in little need of a few years "off" after graduation.

Attitudes toward Employment

As we have seen, fewer and fewer students are interested in going directly on to graduate school. It was mentioned that some feel they have been over-intellectualized and wish to escape from the academic world. Obtaining exposure, experience, and responsibility, as well as acting upon one's idealism, expending physical energy, earning money, and establishing independence are all very important to these young men. However, Harvard seniors also feel that they are entitled to hold jobs and positions that are interesting, challenging, intellectually worthy, and full of opportunity for them to exert their personalities and ideals. The jobs most easily available to them after graduation, while not necessarily meeting all their criteria, have in the past been in banks, brokerage houses, insurance companies, and occasionally in government service, etc. Even these openings, however, because of the current recession, are rapidly becoming less available. Furthermore, many students now feel were they to become employed in such

organizations, their identities would be subsumed and their energies misdirected. Thus, both a growing unwillingness to take traditional jobs and the increasing unavailability of such employment explain why some recent graduates find themselves holding positions as cab drivers, warehouse men, or book store employees.

Part of the problem arises from a certain ideological mistrust and fear of business and the professions generally. A portion of this mistrust seems to be rooted in the fact that undergraduates have remarkably little knowledge about or experience in the professions or the employment opportunities available to them. Most of their information and hence their stereotypes come from dining room conversations with their peers, their reading, and their family experience. Some acknowledge a nagging belief that engagement in most occupations, except possibly in academics, would involve a serious distortion of their own value system. Others feel that involvement in big industry, government, law, or medicine would require them to participate in activities that run counter to their extraordinarily high idealistic values. No doubt instances of conflict and perhaps value compromise would occur. However, some students focus almost solely on these aspects without giving appropriate attention to the various rewards and the sense of accomplishment and effectiveness that could accrue from association with a particular profession. Still others have a difficulty reconciling the apparent incongruity of engaging in the time-consuming, day-to-day activities of a given profession when major issues such as pollution, the establishment of peace, the abolition of discriminating practices, and the improvement of our cities await attention and solution.

These ambiguities occasionally lead some men who had originally intended to work after graduation to resign themselves to a general field of graduate study, such as law, and hence, to postpone the problem of commitment for a few

more years. Others, of course, suppress their reservations and seek and accept salaried positions. Increasingly, however, some overtly refuse to consider employment in large governmental and industrial bureaucracies, or at least they do not search for it seriously. Instead they find themselves engaged in a wide variety of often manual employment. Some of these men actively seek out positions as craftsmen in furniture making, leather working, glass blowing, etc. Others happily embrace the chance to work with their hands as farmers, mechanics, etc. Actually, many of these students seem to regard craft, skilled and manual work, in a romantic light. Seeking "meaningful" activities, they express a desire to work with their hands, feeling that this would provide them with the maximum amount of satisfaction at this stage of their development. Others seem to be content or obliged to accept casual employment, the most common example of which is taxi driving. Whatever the specific job, it is clear that a number of current graduates of the College either welcome or tolerate positions which make few intellectual demands on them; these seem to provide the time to use the physical and emotional energies which were held in somewhat of a "reserve" status during the college years.

By dwelling on this topic at such length, one might form the impression that hordes of Harvard graduates are engaged in such activities: this is probably not the case. While the Directors of this Office believe that an increasing number of students express interest in such employment, no hard data is available on the actual number so engaged.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are by no means complete, nor is there any guarantee that their implementation would solve the problems previously discussed. Also, since these

recommendations involve off-campus activities that require the cooperation of other agencies and institutions, some of them may be difficult to implement. Despite these limitations, they are included in this report because they might contribute to the current discussion about how Harvard's undergraduate program could be modified to meet more of the needs and concerns of its students. As will be seen, these proposals are based on the belief that in their undergraduate years many students will benefit from experience and opportunities beyond those available in the current curriculum, and perhaps beyond what is available in Cambridge. Maturity, independence, responsibility, self-confidence and a genuine concern for others seem to be appropriate goals of an educational institution dedicated to developing excellence. Therefore, opportunities ought to be incorporated within the Harvard experience which enable students to work toward these goals as well as toward academic excellence.

1. Time Off

If the postgraduate activity of many students is a reaction against their experience at Harvard, and if those responsible for the educational philosophy of the University feel that the purpose of the institution is to do more than stimulate the intellect, then certain changes in the undergraduate program might be contemplated. If it could be arranged with Selective Service, students might be encouraged, not simply allowed, to spend one or two terms travelling, working, or exploring unfamiliar social conditions. Hopefully, by the time they receive their degree they will have developed a greater sense of independence, self-confidence, and responsibility for the running of their lives, as well as a mature sensitivity to the feelings, plights, and concerns of others.

Similarly, it may be worthwhile to consider instituting an admissions policy that encourages high school seniors to engage in useful activity for one or two years before entering Harvard.

Granted, this represents a radical change from the present policy and the mental sets of most people in this country. If, as has been suggested, able people with extensive nonacademic experience perform at a higher level at Harvard than those with more limited exposure, consideration should be given to changing the admissions policy to favor these candidates. By no means would students applying directly out of secondary school find themselves discriminated against solely on that basis. Those accepted, however, would have to possess truly superlative academic and nonacademic credentials. Another group might be tentatively accepted pending the completion of some sort of service or work experience. Those clearly out of the running should be rejected and urged to consider other institutions.

2. Field Work

In addition to considering the recommendation that would urge students to take a break in their education either before or during their tenure at Harvard, the University might also consider encouraging each student to engage in field work which would be related, when possible, to his field of concentration. Although undergraduates occasionally receive credit at Harvard for nonacademic field work done elsewhere, such a practice is not built into the curriculum as are the independent study and pass-fail options. A program instituted along these lines should be designed to increase the student's sense of responsibility, self-confidence, and independence.

3. Increased Term-Time and Summer Employment

From a very practical standpoint, continuing attention to a term-time and summer placement program is a necessity as educational costs continue to rise and scholarship funds are not able to increase proportionately. Unless steps are taken to

cope with this problem, many undergraduates may complete Harvard with substantial debts and such a burden may constitute a psychological and financial barrier to graduate school. Furthermore, the experience gained in such jobs is frequently an aid to making later vocational plans.

4. Role Models

As has been noted students lack information about the professions. As a result it might be wise to establish opportunities whereby students could interact with professionals in fields other than higher education. While undergraduates have considerable access to instructors in classrooms and House dining rooms, they have little or no interchange of a similar nature with lawyers, doctors, government officials, ministers, engineers, architects, etc. Perhaps more non-resident tutors in the Houses should come from the ranks of local professionals and young alumni.

A P P E N D I C E S

I

EVENTUAL CAREER PLANS OF THE CLASSES OF 1970 & 1969

	1970	1969
University Professor	143	146
Scientific & Technical	20	17
Law	168	167
Medicine	173	168
Business	85	107
Ministerial	12	9
Literary Pursuits	24	29
Arts	38	37
Teaching	46	51
Government	29	53
Military	1	1
Design	23	26
Miscellaneous	13	7
Helping Professions	11	26
No Information	83	53
Uncertain	207	206
Radical Politics	3	9
	1079	1112

II

IMMEDIATE PLANS OF THE CLASSES OF 1970 & 1969

	1970	1969
Graduate Study		
Medicine	148	142
Arts & Science	147	137
Law	96	121
Business	22	30
Theology	21	21
Education	10	20
Design	17	11
Other	32	36
Total Grad. Study	493 (45.7%)	518 (46.9%)
Employment		
Teaching	66	138
Ed. Admin.	11	1
Business	62	58
Misc./don't know	44	25
VISTA, Peace Corps	40	78
Government Service	1	10
Politics	18	--
Journalism	4	9
Laborer	9	5
Other	21	11
Total Employment	276 (25.5%)	335 (30.3%)
Military Service	113 (10.5%)	109 (9.9%)
Travel	78 (7.2%)	39 (3.5%)
Indefinite	62 (5.8%)	50 (4.5%)
No Information	57 (5.3%)	54 (4.9%)
TOTAL	1079 (100.0%)	1105 (100.0%)

III

IMMEDIATE PLANS OF HARVARD CLASSES**1958-1970

	1970	1969	1968	1967	1966	1965	1964	1963	1962	1961	1960	1959	1958
GRADUATE STUDY	45.7%	46.5%	47.5%	68%	74%	71%	67%	65%	65%	64%	61%	56%	59%
JOB	25.5%	30.6%	24.6%	18%	15%	16%	18%	13%	13%	11%	11%	14%	10%
MILITARY	10.5%	10.1%	17.5%	9%	7%	8%	9%	11%	14%	15%	18%	19%	19%
TRAVEL	7.2%	3.5%	1.1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	1%
INDEFINITE	5.8%	4.5%	4.1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	7%	3%	5%	5%	3%	5%
NO INFO	5.3%	4.8%	5.2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	7%	6%

IV

FIELD OF IMMEDIATE OR EVENTUAL GRADUATE STUDY
FOR THE CLASSES 1964 - 1970

	1970	1969	1968	1967	1966	1965	1964
Arts & Science	217	235	293	407	375	371	323
Law	205	220	228	229	224	200	163
Business	73	90	119	143	110	103	74
Medicine	169	177	169	121	171	145	125
Education	31	49	43	51	42	26	31
Design	30	30	28	26	25	27	23
Divinity	23	24	14	19	19	8	20
Other	42	67	41	61	61	45	13

CLASS OF 1970 GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATION RECORD

	Med.	Law	Bus.	Ed.	Design	Theol.	Interntl. Affairs	Jrnlsm.	Fine Arts	Arts & Sci.	Engin.	Comptr. Sci.	Other
# of applicants	183	209	62	25	27	25	21	3	17	209	7	13	5
# of successful applicants	153	145	35	19	22	21	15	1	11	166	6	10	2
# of applications to Harvard	126	156	49	15	21	13	9	-	-	115	-	5	1
# of applications accepted by Harvard	38	55	15	10	14	7	5	-	-	52	-	2	-
# of applications submitted	1735	778	144	37	67	37	35	4	40	714	13	16	5
# of applications accepted	391	283	57	26	37	24	22	1	19	408	12	10	3
# planning to register	150	94	21	10	15	20	9	-	7	147	4	5	2

VI

CLASS OF 1970 GRADUATE SCHOOL ACCEPTANCES X GRADUATION STANDING

	Reg. A.B.	Cum Laude	CLGS	Magna	H.H.
Medicine	47/421* (11.1%)	77/358 (21.5%)	126/520 (24.2%)	106/354 (29.9%)	35/82 (42.7%)
Law	27/185 (14.5%)	76/241 (31.1%)	79/192 (41.1%)	89/148 (59.5%)	12/12 (100%)
Business	25/76 (32.9%)	9/25 (36.0%)	14/33 (42.4%)	8/9 (88.9%)	1/1 (100%)
Education	3/5 (60%)	11/15 (73.3%)	10/15 (66.7%)	2/2 (100%)	-/-
Design	3/3 (100%)	9/19 (47.4%)	9/18 (50%)	15/26 (57.7%)	1/1 (100%)
Divinity	3/8 (37.5%)	6/11 (54.5%)	8/8 (100%)	7/10 (70%)	-/-
International Affairs	-/2 (0%)	9/16 (56.2%)	12/16 (75%)	1/1 (100%)	-/-
Fine Arts	5/12 (41.7%)	10/15 (66.7%)	2/7 (28.6%)	2/7 (28.6%)	1/1 (100%)
GSAS	15/41 (36.6%)	88/175 (50.3%)	54/106 (50.9%)	182/307 (59.2%)	69/85 (81.2%)

* first number = acceptances

second number = total applications

% = percent accepted

VII

GRADUATION STANDING OF THE CLASSES OF 1964-1970

	1970	1969	1968	1967	1966	1965	1964
Reg. A.B.	26.8%	28.9%	31%	31%	33%	33%	36%
Cum in Field	24.4%	24.9%	27%	31%	27%	31%	26%
CLGS	24.7%	21.8%	19%	16%	16%	12%	12%
Magna	19.4%	18.3%	18%	19%	19%	21%	22%
Magna Highest	1.4%	1.3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Summa	2.9%	4.9%	4%	2%	4%	2%	3%

VIII

IMMEDIATE PLANS X AREA OF CONCENTRATION

FOR THE CLASS OF 1970

	Humanities	Social Sciences	Natural Sciences	TOTAL
Medical School	11	44	93	148
Law School	16	72	8	96
Business School	3	16	3	22
Educ. School	3	7	--	10
Design School	6	7	4	17
Divinity School	7	12	2	21
GSAS	37	58	52	147
Other Schools	15	11	6	32
Teaching	22	34	10	66
Social Service	7	29	4	40
Military Service	25	70	18	113
Journalism	2	2	--	4
Government	--	1	--	1
Other employment	30	79	27	136
Other (travel, arts, etc.)	35	60	12	107
No Information	24	25	9	57
Indefinite	20	35	7	62
TOTAL	263	563	255	1079

IX

EVENTUAL CAREER X AREA OF CONCENTRATION

FOR THE CLASS OF 1970

	Humanities	Social Sciences	Natural Sciences	TOTAL
Univ. Professor	49	47	47	143
Science & Tech.	--	4	16	20
Law	27	137	4	168
Medicine	15	53	105	173
Business	12	58	15	85
Divinity	2	10	--	12
Literary Activity	12	10	2	24
The Arts	24	12	2	38
Elem. or Sec. Teaching	19	22	5	46
Government	1	27	1	29
Military	--	--	1	1
Design	13	7	3	23
Social Work	2	7	2	11
Radical Politics	--	3	--	3
Uncertain	52	115	40	207
Miscellaneous	5	6	2	13
No Information	30	42	10	83
TOTAL	263	563	255	1079

END

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